CAL STATE EAST BAY | DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS

Sunday, November 1, 2026 @ 1 p. m.
Recital Hall, MB 1055

Galan Trio

Kinesis

Song of Sanshin	Bonnie Miksch
Wayfinding	Bruce Hamilton
La mar amarga	Cindy Cox

Intermission

Piano Trio	Ryan Francis
Flowering Branches VII. With restrained elegance	Ryan M. Howard
Syneche	Inés Thiebaut
Liminal Spaces	Michael Johanson

The cello for this concert is generously sponsored by Ifshin Violins.

Song of Sanshin begins and ends with the traditional Korean melody *sang-ryung-san*. Its rhythmic freedom, ornamentation, and pentatonic framework shape the work throughout. Inspired by symmetry in Korean art and mountain contours, the music follows an arch form, contrasting complex inner sections with meditative simplicity. The three instruments play embellished, loosely aligned versions of the same melody, expressing variety within unity. Originally a prayer to the Buddha on a spiritual mountain, *sang-ryung-san* also inspired my evocation of Sanshin, the mountain spirit of Korean shamanism: a reverence for mountains, mysticism, and the soul's longing, suggesting a solitary journey shared across time.

Wayfinding, written for Galan Trio in 2026, weaves motivic threads through a variety of contrasting scenes. It opens with a brief descending chord sequence which acts as transitional material throughout the piece—acting much like portals between spaces and always returning in different guises. Larger sections are by turns playful, lyrical, menacing, kinetic, static, mysterious, and quirky. Some parts veer into texture-based music while others threaten a pop song. Throughout these shifting landscapes, each member of the trio emerges in soloistic moments. Exploration of sonority and timbre is often at the forefront of this music, alongside the recurring motivic ideas, even as the moods swing between passages.

La mar amarga takes its title from Federico García Lorca's famous Romance sonámbulo, which opens with "Verde que te quiero verde" [Green, I love you green]. The title, meaning "the bitter sea," comes from a later section of the poem. I loved the sound of the elided repetition of "(l)a mar" and its relationship to the covered repetitions in my own piece.
Another inspiration was Theodor Schwenk's Sensitive Chaos, published in the 1960s and subtitled "The creation of flowing forms in water and air." Its mix of poetry and science, with chapter headings such as "Archetypal movements of water" and "The formation of vortices," offered inspiring metaphors for my approach to musical shape and direction. Like the gorgeous images of water and wind patterns at the end of the book, my music strives for a form simultaneously fluid yet architecturally static.

Piano Trio consists of a three movement structure , characterized by familiar but terse musical gestures. Each movement engages with a tetrachord, the first movement using A-B-C-D and E-F-G-A, the second uses D-Eb-F-G, and the third returns to E-F-G-A. The work eschews any extra-musical references

or programmatic concepts, and is a more stylistically “classical” piece than I expected to write, and it made me reflect on why. Now at the age of 45, a newly felt gravity of habit conflicts with my desire for creative self-reinvention and discovery that is part of being a younger person. However, it has also been rewarding to find my creative voice becoming a more distilled version of its essential self.

Flowering Branches is a continuous, extended-length seven-movement work that exploits all solo and duo possibilities of the ensemble; the final movement, heard on today’s program, is a quasi-palindrome that vaguely evokes the gestures and harmonies of a nineteenth-century piano trio, as though misremembered or heard at a distance. The title is both a metaphor for the work’s overall structure and and allusion (especially evident in the final movement) to its sometimes cryptically Romantic character.

Syneche The historical discourse on continuity and discreteness, dating back to ancient Greek philosophy, encapsulates the tension between unity and plurality in understanding the nature of reality. Atomism, championed by figures like Democritus and Epicurus, posited that matter is composed of indivisible particles, challenging the idea of infinite divisibility inherent in continuity. In contrast, Aristotle and the Stoics upheld continuity, viewing space, time, and motion as continuous entities. Aristotle's concept of *syneche*, or continuity, emphasized the interconnectedness of phenomena without reducing them to discrete units, allowing for potential infinite divisibility without requiring indivisible atoms. This philosophical debate continues to resonate in contemporary mathematics, where modern frameworks like nonstandard analysis and smooth infinitesimal analysis explore the synthesis of continuity and infinitesimals.

Liminal Spaces is a musical exploration of the concept of liminality, a term the Collins Dictionary defines as “of or at the limen, or threshold” or “at a boundary or transitional point between two conditions, stages in a process, ways of life, etc.”
There is great beauty to be found in the act of traversing such transitional points. The journey of moving between stages of a process can be laden with risk, fragility, uncertainty, and vulnerability, and can lead to a wide range of possibilities for meaningful growth. I explore various musical implications of liminality in my work through elevating the structural role of transitional material, which serves as a major component for driving the musical narrative of the work.

Galan Trio has established itself as one of Greece's most active chamber music ensembles, with a strong international presence and a dedication to the promotion of contemporary music. With a focus on commissioning and presenting new works, the ensemble has appeared at major festivals, universities, and cultural institutions in Greece and abroad, including Rice University, Stanford University, and the University of California, Berkeley, while more than forty compositions have been written specifically for the Trio.

Important milestones in the ensemble's career include its participation in the Onassis Foundation's "A Bridge of Music over Syngrou vol. 10," its first appearance at the international microtonal music symposium "Small is Beautiful VI" at the Mozarteum University Salzburg, as well as performances at major events and concert venues throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

A central part of the ensemble's activity is the Kinesis Project, an initiative dedicated to the music of contemporary American composers. Since 2021, the project has developed through concerts, lectures, commissions of new works, and recordings, reaching 50 universities across the United States with its tenth edition in fall 2026.

The Trio's discography comprises eight albums: Switch, Sonnets of Midwinter, Ararat, Kinesis, Kinesis Vol. 2, Kinesis Vol. 3, De Chirico, and Embrace. Its debut album, Switch, featuring works by composers from six countries written specifically for the Trio, received critical acclaim and was broadcast by radio stations in Europe, the United States, and Armenia.

In 2016, the ensemble participated in the Greek Inspirations in China festival on Gulangyu Island, China, while in 2019 it composed and recorded the original soundtrack for the documentary Y1: Silence of the Deep. Galan Trio has collaborated with distinguished musicians and composers from Europe and the Americas, while works dedicated to the ensemble have been published by international music publishers.

Galan Trio has performed at major concert halls and festivals in the United States, Spain, Italy, Austria, Armenia, the Netherlands, and Greece, including the Athens & Epidaurus Festival, the Komitas Festival, the Greek National Opera, the Onassis Foundation, and the Athens Concert Hall.

Upcoming plans include a new Kinesis Project tour in the United States, centered around New York City and Connecticut, as well as a residency at William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

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